



## A1. Accessible Housing

*Accessible housing units are those designed for people with limited mobility, including people in wheelchairs and with hearing or vision impairments. Some examples of housing accessibility considerations include: accessible entrances, common and public use areas, usable doors (by persons in wheelchairs), accessible switches and outlets, walls that could later accept grab bars, and usable kitchens and bathrooms.*

### Key Issues:

- Advocates for greater accessibility report that people who need accessible housing can't find it. In addition, it is common for accessible units to take longer to lease up and they ultimately lease to households that do not need the accessibility features.
- Accessibility needs increase as seniors age; as a result of the "Silver Tsunami" (aging of the baby boom generation), Boulder and the nation are expected to have more residents with accessibility needs in the near future. Please see the Joint Center for Housing Studies at Harvard University's 2014 report [Housing America's Older Adults](#) for a detailed analysis of national trends related to accessibility needs and the ability of our current housing stock to respond.

### Background:

- Boulder's housing stock built prior to 1979: 58.9% (2012, 5-year estimates).<sup>1</sup>
- According to the American Community Survey (2012, 5-year estimates) 2.6% of Boulder's residents (2,393) are mobility impaired and in the Denver MSA, the nearest geography for which these statistics are available, 5.4% of residents are estimated to have a hearing impairment and 2.6% are estimated to be vision impaired.
- At [High Mar](#)—a senior apartment property leased up in 2014 and owned by Boulder Housing Partners (BHP)—during initial lease up, not all accessible units were rented to mobility-impaired residents.
- Boulder County's architectural barrier removal program serves about 2 households each year.
- [Fair Housing Act \(FHA\) 1991](#): Regarding disability, it applies to new units built after 1991 and requires accessible public and common areas as well as hallways and unit features.
- [Americans with Disabilities Act \(ADA\) 1990](#): Title II of ADA applies to housing provided by public entities and Title III requires that public and common use areas in housing developments are accessible.
- [International Building Code \(IBC\) 2012](#): Adopted by City of Boulder; it contains all of the provisions for accessibility from the ADA and FHA.
- The neighboring communities of Lafayette and Arvada have adopted very progressive policies for accessible and visitable housing development.

### Implementation Options:

1. Explore the disconnect between accessible units and programs and the people in Boulder who are expected to need them.
2. Explore providing incentives for new housing units with accessibility features in housing developments with fewer than four units.
3. Explore providing incentives to retrofit existing units.
4. Create new housing visitability requirements similar to the City of Lafayette, CO.

### Goals Addressed Through this Tool:

#### ✓ Strengthen Our Commitments

Maintain the Middle

Create Diverse Housing Choices in Every Neighborhood

Create 15-Minute Neighborhoods

Strengthen Partnerships

#### ✓ Enable Aging in Place

<sup>1</sup> The first accessibility requirements for housing HUD-funded projects took effect in 1978.